DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 460 354 CS 013 597

TITLE	Reading Specifications: Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments for Grades Three and Five.
INSTITUTION	Minnesota State Dept. of Children, Families, and Learning, St. Paul.
PUB DATE	1997-00-00
NOTE	11p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning, 1500 Highway 36 West, Roseville, MN 55113-4266. Tel: 651-582-8200.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom - Learner (051) -- Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Standards; Educational Assessment; Elementary Education; Grade 3; Grade 5; Minimum Competency Testing; Readability; *Reading; *Specifications; State Legislation; *State Standards; *Test Format; *Testing
IDENTIFIERS	*Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment

ABSTRACT

Discussing the established legislation and background behind the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments, this document outlines reading test specifications for third and fifth grade. It gives specifications for grades three and five on Reading Passages, Readability, Test Conditions, and Test Forms. Two sections are devoted to details for each grade including Literal Comprehension Standards, and Interpretation and Evaluation Standards. (SC)

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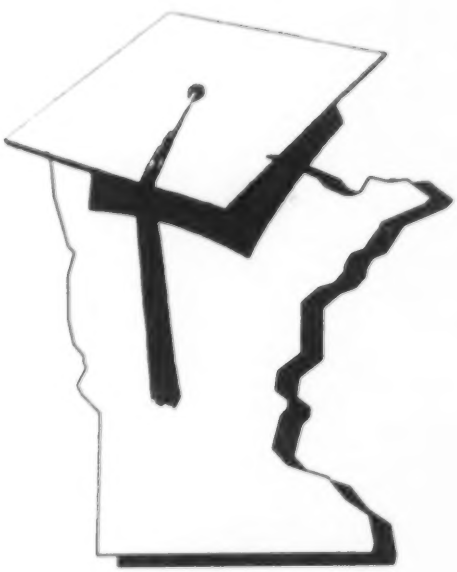
ED 460 354

READING SPECIFICATIONS

MINNESOTA COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENTS FOR GRADES THREE AND FIVE



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READING TEST SPECIFICATIONS

Establishing Legislation

The 1997 legislature enacted into law M.S. 121.113, Statewide Testing and Reporting System, establishing the requirement for annual testing of all students at grades three, five, eight and high school with a single statewide test at each of those grades. The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments fulfill the requirements for statewide testing at grades three and five. The Basic Standards Tests in Reading and Mathematics fulfill the requirements for statewide testing at grade eight.

Background

The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) are a series of tests at grades three and five which will be used to evaluate instruction in the Profile of Learning. Reading and mathematics are assessed at grade three, and reading, mathematics and written composition are assessed at grade five. The MCAs are designed to measure a wide range of student performance. Items reflecting the depth and breadth of composition as defined in the Minnesota Profile of Learning have been created to provide accurate information for students of all ability levels. Over 200 Minnesota teachers from across the state as well as national experts helped to shape the exact requirements of the test. Scoring is done centrally to ensure that each test is graded in a reliable and valid manner. This method eliminates potential bias and ensures all papers are read by qualified readers.

READING PASSAGES FOR GRADES THREE AND FIVE

Genre

Regardless of genre, the reading selections must be of interest to and appropriate for the grade level being tested. Avoid material that focuses on volatile topics which might raise the concern of parents or citizen groups. Selections are of three types.

- **Informational:** nonfiction selections that would commonly be found in age-appropriate periodicals, reference books or textbooks (science, social studies, health, etc.)
- **Practical:** informational selections intended for a specific application such as simple recipes, "how to" instructions, advertisements [Students may be required to understand information represented visually when it is used to support the content of the selection (e.g., illustrations that accompany instructions or recipes).]
- **Literary:** fictional selections such as short stories, poems or excerpts from longer passages, novels or other age-appropriate literary publications (e.g., *Cricket Magazine*).

Standard English

Passages, poems, stories, or other selections chosen for the test must be written in standard English. Fictional selections may include non-biased literary conventions that may not be regarded as standard English (e.g., colloquial expressions in dialogue) but which are appropriate for the grade level being tested.

Prior Knowledge

The student reader should be able to appreciate and understand the selection on its own merit. References to people, places and events should either be explained within the selection or be considered common knowledge that needs no further explanation. Figurative language, which often requires prior knowledge or certain cultural background to be understood, should be explained within the selection or be defined through context.

Bias

Selections should be free from bias based on race, gender, religion, disability or sexual orientation. Consider such things as the tone and nature of the selection, values implicitly or explicitly conveyed, vocabulary or phrasing that may discriminate against a particular group, and traditional or nontraditional assumptions present in a selection that would put one group at an advantage over another. Topics that may be offensive to test takers could be another source of bias. Notice omissions and stereotypes of minority or gender groups in both the selection itself and in accompanying pictures or illustrations.

Readability Specifications for Grades Three and Five

DRP Level

For grade three, the selections should fall within a Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) Range of 40–56 with an average of 48 for the test form. Forty-eight (48) is the level of a typical third-grade text book as measured by the DRP. All selections must be reviewed by a panel of grade-level teachers.

For grade five, the selections should fall within a DRP range of 44–64 with an average of 54 for the test form. Fifty-four (54) is the level of a typical fifth-grade text book as measured by the DRP. All selections must be reviewed by a panel of grade-level teachers.

Coherence

Nonfiction selections must be reviewed for organization, clarity of sentence structure, use of technical language and adequate development of ideas. Literary selections should use conventions appropriate for students in the grade level being tested.

Testing Conditions for Grades Three and Five

The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments are untimed tests. Testing sessions of 60–90 minutes should be scheduled on two successive days. Many students may finish early, but all students should be allowed to continue beyond the scheduled testing session as long as they are making progress in answering questions. Testing must be completed within the officially designated testing dates.

Test Forms for Grades Three and Five

Each year, ten forms of the test will be created containing 46 multiple-choice and 3 open-ended questions to which each student will respond. (These questions are called common items.) Each form will also contain 11 questions which will be answered only by students who receive that particular test form. (These questions are called matrix items.) Each student will answer 60 questions for a total of 72 score points. Individual student scores will be based on responses to the 49 common items (58 possible score points). School- and/or district-level scores will be based on students' responses to 159 common and matrix items (198 possible score points).

ITEMS	MULTIPLE-CHOICE 1 point each	OPEN-ENDED 4 points each	TOTAL # OF ITEMS	TOTAL SCORE POINTS	REPORTING
Common items (same for all students)	46	+ 3	= 49	58	• Taken by all students • Individual student scores based only on these items
Matrix items per form (10 different forms)	10	+ 1	= 11	14	• Each student is given one form
Total number of questions for each student	56	+ 4	= 60	72	• Scores for matrix items reported at the district level but not reported at student level
Total number of questions for school/district scores	146	+ 13	= 159	198	• Reported at school/district level

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TEST SPECIFICATIONS FOR GRADE THREE

Reading selections may include grade-level selections from reading texts and/or trade books. Readability formulas must be used to establish level of difficulty.

Final test forms may include up to eight selections total with at least one of each of the following:

- ☐ fictional story
- ☐ poem
- ☐ nonfictional text such as a recipe or set of instructions
- ☐ nonfictional informative selection such as an excerpt from a grade level textbook
- ☐ selections which incorporate charts, tables, graphs or visual representations as support for information in the text

Selections on the final test form should be balanced in terms of length of text and number of questions.

Questions must reflect the requirements of the content standards.

TEST ITEMS—GRADE THREE

GRADE THREE LITERAL COMPREHENSION STANDARD

Comprehend literal meaning in reading, viewing and listening selections*

What students should do:

1. **Read, view or listen to nonfiction selections and stories.**

   a. **identify main ideas and some supporting details**
   b. **retell main events or ideas in sequence**
   c. **pronounce new words using phonic skills**
   d. **read aloud fluently with appropriate expression**
   e. **demonstrate appropriate techniques for learning new vocabulary (e.g., contextual clues, vocabulary journals, use of dictionary skills)**
   f. **interpret presentations of data (e.g., charts, tables, graphs)**

Test items may require students to:

- retell a story in their own words.
- give examples from the selection to support an idea.
- identify word meaning from context.
- summarize main ideas.
- answer questions based on instructions from text and accompanying illustrations.
- sequence events.

*Note: While this standard is written to include viewing and listening, these will be assessed only at the classroom level through performance packages. Therefore, the portions of this standard referring to viewing and listening will not be addressed on this test.

Grade Three Interpretation and Evaluation Standard

Interpret and evaluate information in reading, viewing and listening selections*

What students should do:

1. **Read, view or listen to age-appropriate nonfiction selections and stories.**

   a. **understand ideas not explicitly stated**
   b. **make predictions based on information in the selection**
   c. **draw conclusions based on information in the selection**
   d. **compare and contrast elements of the story or selection (e.g., characters, ideas, events)**
   e. **distinguish facts from opinions**

2. **Summarize ideas and identify tone in persuasive, fictional and documentary presentations.**

Test items may require students to:

- identify author's point of view.
- choose the best description based on information in the text.
- tell why a title or illustration is appropriate for a selection.
- explain why characters might feel as they do.
- identify the tone of a selection.
- extend logical conclusions based on information in the selection (e.g., explain why it is important to follow the author's directions in an instructional selection).
- tell what might happen next.
- find similarities and differences.
- distinguish facts from opinions.

*Note: While this standard is written to include viewing and listening, these will be assessed only at the classroom level through performance packages. Therefore, the portions of this standard referring to viewing and listening will not be addressed on this test.

TEST SPECIFICATIONS FOR GRADE FIVE

The Reading test may include grade-level selections from reading texts and/or trade books. Readability formulas must be used to establish level of difficulty.

Final test forms may include up to eight selections total with at least one of each of the following:

- ☐ fictional story
- ☐ poem
- ☐ nonfictional text such as a recipe or set of instructions
- ☐ nonfictional informative selection such as an excerpt from a grade level text book
- ☐ selections which incorporate charts, tables, graphs or visual representations as support for information in the text
- ☐ advertisement

Selections on the final test form should be balanced in terms of length and number of questions.

Questions must reflect the requirements of the content standards.

TEST ITEMS—GRADE FIVE

GRADE FIVE LITERAL COMPREHENSION STANDARD

Comprehend literal meaning of information received through reading, viewing and listening selections*

What students should do:

1. **Read, view and listen to nonfiction selections and stories.**

   a. **identify main ideas and supporting details**
   b. **retell main events or ideas in sequence**
   c. **pronounce new words using phonics**
   d. **demonstrate techniques of improving and expanding vocabulary (e.g., contextual clues, personal word list, dictionary skills, flashcards)**
   e. **demonstrate age-appropriate reading rate**

2. **Read and apply technical instructions to perform an action (e.g., set up a lab, put together a model).**

3. **Use presentations of data to understand scientific or mathematical information.**

4. **Summarize ideas and information from visual presentations.**

Test items may require students to:

- retell a story in their own words.
- give examples from the selection to support an idea.
- identify word meaning from context.
- summarize main ideas.
- answer questions based on instructions from text and accompanying illustrations.
- answer questions based on information from text and accompanying charts or graphs.
- sequence events.

*Note: While this standard is written to include viewing and listening, these will be assessed only at the classroom level through performance packages. Therefore, the portions of this standard referring to viewing and listening will not be addressed on this test.

Grade Five Interpretation and Evaluation Standard

Interpret and evaluate information in reading, viewing and listening selections

What students should do:

1. **Read, view or listen to age-appropriate nonfiction selections and stories.**

   a. **distinguish fact from opinion**
   b. **interpret figurative language**
   c. **make predictions based on information in the selection**
   d. **compare and contrast settings, ideas or actions**
   e. **understand ideas not stated explicitly in the selection (e.g., point of view, allusion, tone)**

2. **Interpret the effects of persuasive visual messages.**

Test items may require students to:

- identify author's point of view.
- choose the best description based on information in the text.
- tell why a title or illustration is appropriate for a selection.
- explain why characters might feel as they do.
- identify the tone of a selection.
- extend logical conclusions based on information in the selection (e.g., explain why it is important to follow the author's directions in an instructional selection).
- find similarities and differences.
- tell what might happen next.
- distinguish facts from opinions.
- create an advertisement using information from the selection to convince an audience.
- explain or interpret the meaning of figurative expressions found in the text.
- explain or interpret the effect of visual techniques used to highlight ideas in a text or advertisement.
- explain how the feelings of one character might differ from another in a similar situation.

*Note: This standard is written to include viewing and listening as well as the performance of a specific action to demonstrate comprehension. These will only be assessed at the classroom level through performance packages; therefore, portions of this standard will not be addressed on this test.